

Christopher Laidley Warehouse
369-371 South Main Street
Providence
Providence County
Rhode Island

HABS No. RI-216

HABS
RI,
4-PROV,
118-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

CHRISTOPHER SHELDON WAREHOUSE

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Address: 369-371 South Main Street, northwest corner South Main and Guilder Streets, Providence, Providence County, Rhode Island.

Present Owner: Maurania Corporation.

Present Occupant: L. M. Goff Company

Present Use: Sales building and repair shop for boating supplies and boats.

Brief Statement of Significance: This is an early example of a large masonry warehouse.

PART 1. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners:

In 1770 Deacon Joseph Sheldon bought this property and in 1770 he transferred it to his son Christopher. At the time there was a Dwelling House, shop, warehouse, Wharf 144' long to the head and other improvements. - Notes at the Rhode Island Historical Society gathered by Henry R. Chace in preparation of his book, Owners and Occupants of the Lots, Houses and Shops in the Town of Providence, Rhode Island in 1798, Located on Maps of the Highways of that Date (Providence, 1914).

1779 Chace lists Christopher Sheldon as having "a tolerable old house, wharf, and store..a cooper's shop. - Notes at the Rhode Island Historical Society gathered by Henry R. Chace in preparation of his book, Owners and Occupants of the Lots, Houses and Shops in the Town of Providence, Rhode Island in 1798, Located on Maps of the Highways of that Date (Providence, 1914).

1784 The cornerstone of the present building bears this date.

1803 In the division of Christopher Sheldon's Estate he gives this property Lot #1, to Joseph Sheldon under the name of Joseph Cooke (since changed to Joseph Sheldon Cooke). - Deed Book 27, page 573, in Providence City Hall.

- 1610 Joshua Sheldon sells to George and Oliver Earle for \$3250 "a certain lot of land with Dwelling House, stores, buildings and improvements. Beginning at N/E corner of a Public Gangway; W/ly on Main Street (formerly Water Street) 34' to a private gangway 14' wide laid out between said lot and lot of land sold by Remington Sheldon to Joseph Carlo Mauran et al, holding 34' width S/ly on said private gangway to Channel of the River.. E/ly on public gangway. This lot is Lot #1 sell off to Joseph Sheldon in the division of Christopher Sheldon's Estate in 1603. - Deed Book 34, page 124, in Providence City Hall.
- 1654 Property taxed to R D and C B Earle and was owned by the Earle family until
- 1945 Kenneth H Earle sells to Jean Carbone the property on the N/W corner of Guilder and South Main Streets. Bounded: N by Guilder Street 59.54' S/Wly by land of Bertram Hornby 37.28'; N/Ely 67.100'; S/Ely part on Silverstein and part on Walter Callon. - Deed Book 890, page 319, in Providence City Hall.
- 1946 Property taxed to Isidor Schechtman.
- 1953 Property taxed to Rhode Island Covering Company Inc.
- 1961 Dana H Swan and Bernard R Pollock, co-receivers of the R I Covering Co., sell for \$75,000 to Mauracia Corp TWO certain parcels of land.

FIRST PARCEL: That parcel of land with all buildings and improvements on the W/ly side of South Main Street and N/ly side of Guilder Street and E/ly side of South Water Street and partly on the S/ly side of Doubloon Street bounded: E/ly by South Main Street 174'; S/ly by Guilder Street 122'; W/ly by South Water Street 133' to land of Solomon Tannenbaum, thence E/ly bounding N/ly on said Tannenbaum land 71' to S/E corner of Tannenbaum land, thence N/ly bounding W/ly on said Tannenbaum's land 40' to said Doubloon Street, thence E/ly bounding N/ly on said Doubloon Street 51.61' more or less to South Main Street and point of beginning, being the entire block bounded by South Main, Guilder, South Water, and Doubloon Streets except for said Tannenbaum land at N/W corner of Block. - Deed Book 1110, page 684, in Providence City Hall.

2. Date of erection: The building was probably built in 1784 as indicated by a carved date stone in the foundation on the rear of the building. If so, it would have

survived the fire of 1801 which destroyed most of South Main Street. The floors and roof of the present building are laid in mortar in a fireproofing technique that does not seem to have been used until after the fire in Providence, indicating that the building may have been gutted by the fire and the interior rebuilt.

3. Notes on alterations and additions: The building probably extended forward about 20' further originally. South Main Street was widened from 40' to 60' between 1902 and 1905, and presumably the present brick front dates from then.
4. Sources of information: John Hutchins Cady, The Civic and Architectural Development of Providence 1636-1950 (Providence, Rhode Island: The Book Shop, 1957), p. 200.

Prepared by Antoinette F. Downing and Elvira Gowdey
for the Providence Preservation Society
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PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: This is an early example of a large masonry warehouse. Notable features include the rough stone masonry work, and the double wood floors and roof laid in mortar for fireproofing.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: About 30' wide x 36' deep, facing east, three-and-a-half stories, on sloping lot with cellar at ground level in rear.
2. Foundations: Stone.
3. Wall construction: Random laid, rough cut stone; later front, with open shop front on first floor with iron columns, brick above.
4. Chimneys: Original chimney in center of building, later chimney at west end wall.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Later entrances in front. South side, entrances to each floor under hoist,

with iron doors. Similar doors to each floor on rear, top two closed, fitted with window on main floor. Heavy stone lintels over openings in stone masonry, sides of the openings framed with brick.

- b. Windows and shutters: Simple double hung windows, some six light sash, other two and one light sash. Some windows fitted with heavy rough shutter hardware, probably for iron shutters.

6. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Gable, shingled. Roof boards covered with rough split lath and plastered both on inside and outside. Heavy timber rafters lathed and plastered.
- b. Cornice: Simple brick cornice with brick dentils.
- c. Dormers: Gabled dormer over hoist on south side.

C. Technical Description of Interior

- 1. Floor plans: Original arrangement with simple open room on each floor still visible on top two floors, exposed structure with longitudinal girder on wood posts along the center of each floor.
- 2. Flooring: Wide boards in double thickness with 1/4" layer of plaster between. Original boards apparently oak - new floors in cellar, first and second floors.
- 3. Wall and ceiling finish: Exposed floor structure in ceilings. Stone walls plastered roughly, on top two floors. Interiors of first and second floors finished off later.
- 4. Doors: No original interior doors survive, probably none used.
- 5. Hardware: Some original heavy wrought iron eyes to receive large pintles are in place at the exterior doors under the hoist. Old winch in attic for hoist on south side.
- 6. Lighting: Electric.
- 7. Heating: Modern central heat.

D. Site

- 1. General setting and orientation: Faces east in commercial area, northwest corner of South Main and Guilden Streets, on sidewalk line at front, slightly sloping lot.
- 2. Walks: Cobblestone alley on south side.